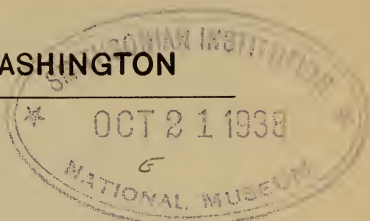


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON



DESCRIPTIONS OF TWO NEW RACES OF THE
GROUND CUCKOO (*MOROCOCCYX ERY-*
THROPYGUS [LESSON] FROM MEXICO.

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This curious cuckoo, type of the monotypic genus *Morococcyx*, is commonly represented in most of the larger collections in America and abroad, but by far the great majority of specimens are from Central America and belong to the typical race *erythropygus*. This occurs commonly along the Pacific slope from Costa Rica to southeastern Chiapas with no trenchant geographic variation, save that an offshoot which inhabits the arid Motagua Valley in interior Guatemala has been described by Griscom (Amer. Mus. Novit., 414, 1930, p. 2) as *Morococcyx erythropygus macrourus* on the basis of longer tail and slightly paler coloration. In Oaxaca there is an abrupt change in several characters and Ridgway has named the larger and much paler colored race of that region as *Morococcyx erythropygus mexicanus*. Unfortunately, specimens from north of Oaxaca have been included under this name, principally because the comparative scarcity of the species northerly has made the accumulation of material difficult, and there simply are not enough specimens in American collections to define the behavior of the species from more northern points. This lack has led to the unjustifiable "lumping" of what are in reality three races into one, and conversely has operated to obscure the real characters of *mexicanus*.

A synopsis of the situation in western Mexico is appended to the formal descriptions which follow. Parenthetically it may be stated here that the definitions are possible chiefly through the opportunity to study the great collections of Mexican birds in

the British Museum. As in many other cases the material in America is, to be frank, inadequate, and is of use chiefly to verify or check the characters noted in the British Museum series.

***Morococcyx erythropygus simulans*, subsp. nov.**

Type.—Adult, sex not recorded, 97.4.1.70 British Museum; Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico, September, 1888; collected by Mrs. H. H. Smith.

Subspecific characters.—Similar to *Morococcyx erythropygus erythropygus* (Lesson) of Central America in the dark coloration of the underparts and in general size; differs, however, in the very much darker under tail coverts (dark uniform chocolate instead of reddish brown mixed with rufous), darker under surface of rectrices, more diffused and less sharply defined tail markings, paler upper parts, and more greenish (less purplish) reflections on the upper surface of the tail. Resembles *Morococcyx erythropygus mexicanus* Ridgway of Oaxaca in the relatively pale upper parts and diffused tail markings, but differs in the *very much* darker underparts and under tail coverts, darker under surface of rectrices, and smaller size.

Range.—The State of Guerrero (Acapulco; La Venta; Sierra Madre del Sur; Dos Arroyos; Cayacal).

***Morococcyx erythropygus dilutus*, subsp. nov.**

Type.—Female adult, 97.1.4.62 British Museum; San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico, May 10, 1889; collected by W. B. Richardson.

Subspecific characters.—Similar to *Morococcyx erythropygus mexicanus* of Oaxaca but size smaller; coloration slightly paler below; under tail coverts very much darker and in decided contrast to the pale abdominal region; upper parts slightly darker and grayer, with the greenish gloss on the upper surfaces of the wings and tail at a minimum for the species; under surface of tail very much darker and with black subterminal bar and terminal light tip obsolete. Differs from the geographically nearest race, *simulans* of Guerrero, in very much paler underparts, more diffused and more nearly obsolete tail markings, and grayer (less greenish) wings and tail.

Range.—Colima (Plains of Colima; Manzanillo), Nayarit (San Blas), and Sinaloa (Mazatlan).

Remarks.—The general geographic trends observable in this species are (1) the under surface of the tail, which is silvery gray with well defined terminal markings southerly, and dark slate with diffused or obsolete markings northerly; (2) the color of the upper parts which is darker and more iridescent southerly and more grayish green and less iridescent northerly. However, there are several characters which break up these gradual trends into distinct and abruptly defined races. These are: (1) size, by which the smaller *erythropygus* of Central America is separated from the equally small *simulans* and *dilutus* by the larger *mexicanus* of Oaxaca; (2) coloration of the under parts, which from south to north present the following combinations: *erythropygus* with dark underparts and mixed

rufous and chocolate under tail coverts; *mexicanus* with pale underparts and pale rufous under tail coverts; *simulans* with dark under parts and dark chocolate under tail coverts; *dilutus* with pale underparts and dark chocolate under tail coverts.

In the above discussion I have not considered *Morococyx erythropygus macrourus* Griscom of the arid interior of Guatemala since it is in the nature of an offshoot from the direct line of the north-south chain of races. It is said to be similar to *erythropygus* but with longer tail and slightly paler coloration, in both of which particulars it appears to be intermediate toward *mexicanus*.

MEASUREMENTS (SEX DISREGARDED).

	Wing	Tail
26 <i>erythropygus</i>	95-103	115-134
20 <i>mexicanus</i>	94-109	126-143
10 <i>simulans</i>	90-97	108-138
7 <i>dilutus</i>	92-98	118-133